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Senate

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session and resume consideration of the nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of MARCIA LOUISE FUDGE, of Ohio, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Arkansas.

CENSORSHIP

Mr. COTTON. Mr. President, most Americans know that there are two sexes, male and female, and that sex is rooted in science. Most Americans also know that we ought to treat all people, including those who feel conflicted about their gender, with respect and dignity, without sacrificing the truth in the process.

These beliefs are now under attack from some of the most powerful corporations in the history of the world. Just a few weeks ago, while House Democrats were passing their far-left Equality Act, the leftwing media was busy canceling Dr. Seuss, Amazon quietly erased a book from its online store without notice, without warning, without explanation. That book is "When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment" by Ryan Anderson."

Amazon claims it banned this book for violating its brandnew policy on "hate speech." Of course, that excuse is arbitrary and patently false. You can go to Amazon right now—right now you can go to Amazon on your phone or on your computer and buy copies of actually hateful books. You can get Hitler's "Mein Kampf" shipped to your door with free Amazon Prime delivery. You can get the "Unabomber Manifesto," written by a serial killer who murdered 3 people and maimed 23 others. You can even get "How to Blow up

a Pipeline." I assume the title speaks for itself. All those books are available for purchase on Amazon right now, one click away. But Amazon wants you to believe that a conservative book is somehow beyond the pale, unacceptably hateful, literally worse than Hitler, as they like to say.

My office asked Amazon to send us the exact passages from "When Harry Became Sally" that it deemed so hateful that it couldn't even sell the book on its website. Shocking surprise, I know, they never got back to us. That is because the book doesn't say anything hateful. To the contrary, the book makes very clear that we should treat people who feel conflicted about their gender with the same respect and compassion that are due to all people. To quote the author, "We should have abundant compassion and charity and patience with people who feel this form of alienation. But we also need to insist on telling the truth . . ."

That is not hate. That is far from it. The author's real offense, his only offense, was telling the truth. He said calmly and compassionately that boys are boys and girls are girls. And the richest man in the world banned his book from his company's platform.

But, of course, you don't have to agree with the commonsense historic understanding of gender in order to acknowledge how dangerous it is for one of the biggest corporations in the history of the world to start banning books because while Amazon's censorship may start with conservative views, it could easily mutate to censor other views that offend Jeff Bezos and his bottom line. Perhaps Amazon will come after union organizers next since they are trying to bust up a union election in Alabama or maybe environmental activists or maybe trustbusters, since so many people are talking about potential antitrust violations in the world of Big Tech.

And even if Amazon goes only this far and no further, the damage of free

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, today, make our Senators custodians of truth. Remind them that when people call a lie the truth, they tamper with their value judgment.

Lord, give our lawmakers the wisdom to know that to scrape away their value judgment will eventually cause them to lose their sense of moral distinctions. May they understand that deception is difficult to quarantine and will corrupt all sense of moral discrimination.

Lord, thank You for being a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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speech has already been done. Books like "When Harry Became Sally" won't get published anymore. Writers who hold unfashionable opinions that just a few days ago were considered basic mainstream views of a large majority of Americans, may decide to self-censor, stay silent.

The virtual book burning may spread to other companies. Maybe Amazon will put a book burning app on its Kindle so readers can drag books from its catalog into the virtual bonfire.

Political correctness will only grow more oppressive if its enforcers, like Amazon, don't face some consequences for their actions. Amazon, for instance, makes billions of dollars each year hosting websites and storing data for the government. Almost all of Amazon's profit is made in these enterprise services, not in its consumer-facing retail business. Those are our tax dollars flowing to a company that uses its power to censor the beliefs of a large majority of Americans. Perhaps it is time for lawmakers to reconsider whether these contracts are in the best interest of our country.

I also note Amazon is the country's largest bookseller, selling three out of every four e-books in America. It is time for lawmakers to evaluate whether Amazon's practices are consistent with our antitrust laws or whether antitrust laws need to be updated to address this type of behavior from a monopolistic firm. We better hurry, though, because maybe they will ban all books on antitrust and monopoly behavior before we have a chance to study the question.

I will close by quoting from the book that Amazon banned, which predicted the very events we are witnessing here today:

If trans activists succeed in their political agenda, our nation's children will be indoctrinated in a harmful ideology, and some will live by its own lies about their own bodies, at great harm to themselves physically, psychologically, and socially. Lives will be ruined, but pointing out the damage will be forbidden. Dissent from the transgender worldview will be punished in schools, workplaces, and medical clinics. Trying to live in accordance with the truth will be made harder.

This is not a fight over hate or bigotry, respect or compassion. It is a battle over truth itself, the truth of who we are as human beings and the fundamental freedom to speak that truth or any other truth without fear.

Throughout our history, Americans have never surrendered to an oppressive tyranny of opinion, whether a majority or, in this case, a small but highly influential minority, and we won't be cowed in silence today. We will fight for what is true. We will fight for the freedom to say it. No matter what the cultural forces arrayed against us do, we will never back down.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SINEMA). The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

BUSINESS BEFORE THE SENATE

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, the Senate returns this week to the business of nominations. Today, the Senate will confirm Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE to be the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, followed by confirmation votes later this week for Merrick Garland to serve as Attorney General and Michael Regan to serve as the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Finally, the Senate will begin the confirmation process for Congresswoman DEB HAALAND before the week is out. She would be the first Native American Cabinet member of any Agency and the first indigenous Secretary of the Interior—a profoundly important moment given the historically troubled relationship between the Federal Government and Tribal nations. Despite Republican obstruction, Representative HAALAND will be confirmed by the Senate to be Secretary HAALAND. I will file cloture on her nomination immediately after my remarks.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

Now on the rescue plan, on Saturday, the American people got to see what a responsive and effective government looks like. A month and a half after assuming the majority, Senate Democrats followed through on our promise to deliver a bold COVID relief bill to help crush the virus, lift this country out of the crisis, and set our economy on a path to a strong recovery.

Earlier today, the final text of the Senate bill was sent to the House of Representatives. Congress remains on track to deliver the American Rescue Plan to President Biden's desk for his signature before enhanced unemployment benefits expire on March 14.

We said we would do it. We are doing it.

Once President Biden signs the American Rescue Plan into law, it will immediately become one of the most sweeping Federal recovery efforts in modern history. It will help restore Americans' faith in government at a time when that is sorely needed, and it will deliver more help to more people than almost anything Congress has accomplished in past decades.

Already the positive reviews are pouring in. According to several reports, the bill will help millions of Americans save hundreds of dollars in healthcare costs. Thanks to a historic expansion of the child tax credit—up to \$3,000 per child under 17 for an overwhelming majority of families—analysts predict the American Rescue Plan will cut child poverty in half.

Let me say that again: Analysts predict the American Rescue Plan will cut

child poverty in half. This has been a goal of this country for decades, and now we are taking real steps to accomplish it.

In fact, the Tax Policy Center predicts the American Rescue Plan will boost the incomes of the poorest 20 percent of Americans by 20 percent, including significant boosts all the way through the middle class.

Meanwhile, the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans will receive an income boost of zero—zero percent for the top 1 percent wealthiest Americans.

Let me say that again because this shows who we are as a party here in the Senate and who we should be as a nation. Let me say: A 20-percent boost in incomes for Americans who are struggling the most; zero percent for those who are at the top already, who are doing very well.

Let's contrast this to the Republican tax bill, which skewed in exactly the opposite direction. If people want to know the difference—the difference in terms of how Democrats feel about whom we should help and how Republicans feel about whom we should help—contrast this bill with the most major accomplishment during the 4 years that Donald Trump was President and it is very apparent.

Back in December, Democrats promised that, if we won the majority, we would deliver \$2,000 checks to American families. That is exactly what we have done. Promise made; promise kept. We helped pass \$600 checks in December and added \$1,400 in the bill we just passed.

Because Democrats kept that promise, Americans are going to receive the help they need quickly. The checks will stimulate the economy, and they are targeted to those Americans who need it the most. It is a promise kept.

The OECD, or the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, projected that the American Rescue Plan could as much as double America's economic growth this year. As a result, it also revised upward its projections for the entire world's economic recovery. Once again, the United States is going to lead the way.

And so, because of what the Senate did last week, healthcare costs will go down, child poverty will be cut in half, Americans will receive direct financial support, and the economy is set for an enormous boost. It is a great beginning for a new administration and a new Senate.

And that is to say nothing of the schools that will receive support to reopen faster and safer, the restaurants and small businesses that will receive a lifeline, the millions of recently unemployed Americans who will continue to receive enhanced benefits until Labor Day, and the millions of workers and retirees who will see their pension plans protected.

Of course, one of the most important aspects of all is the support this bill will give to speed vaccinations and expand testing—exactly what we need to defeat the virus.